

Richie Farmer  
Commissioner



Robert C. Stout, DVM  
State Veterinarian  
100 Foltz Oaks Lane, Suite 252  
Frankfort, KY 40601  
Phone: (502) 564-3956  
Fax: (502) 564-7852  
E-mail: robert.stout@ky.gov

Kentucky Department of Agriculture  
*A Consumer Protection and Service Agency*

December 2, 2010

Robert M Beck Jr, Chairman  
Kentucky Horse Racing Commission  
4063 Iron Works Parkway Building B  
Lexington, KY 40511

Dear Chairman Beck:

*Equine piroplasmosis* (EP) continues to be a disease necessitating greater attention from all of us. Since October of 2009 there have been no fewer than 550 horses throughout the United States found to be infected with the causative protozoan (predominantly *T. equi* but some *B. caballi*) that results in equine piroplasmosis being contracted. Though the vast majority of cases have been discovered in quarter horses, there is growing evidence the disease is present in the thoroughbred racing population as well. Because of limited testing having been conducted in this class of animal, the established prevalence continues to be an unknown. A map depicting the geographic distribution of horses tested and found to be positive during this period is attached for your information. The map was compiled from data provided by the USDA's Veterinary Services. Additionally, equine piroplasmosis continues to be listed and described by the USDA as a Foreign Animal Disease.

With the recent discovery that *equine piroplasmosis* does have some level of prevalence in the racing populations, many states and/or race tracks have begun requiring horses seeking entry onto their grounds to have been tested and reported negative for piroplasmosis prior to being allowed entry onto the backside. I am currently aware horses destined to tracks and/or training facilities in Arkansas, Colorado, Florida, Iowa, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas are required to present proof of having been tested negative for piroplasmosis. This listing should not be construed as complete, and my advice to horsemen and veterinarians shipping to any race track since October of 2010 has been to check the entry requirements prior to departing.

Given the data and knowledge we have today, Dr. Stout and I are of the opinion that until such time that we can better identify the disease prevalence and understand what risk the disease presents to our racing populations (not breed specific), piroplasmosis testing for entry onto all Kentucky tracks is warranted. In addition, we have discussed this growing concern with the Kentucky Racing Commission's veterinary staff and find they share a similar opinion.

Based on the above information, and under the authority found in KRS257.030, the Kentucky State Veterinarians Office is directing that until further notice all equine animals (racing and non-racing) seeking entry onto a race track in Kentucky must be accompanied with a certificate demonstrating the horse(s) was tested for piroplasmosis by a C-ELISA assay for both *T. equi* and *B. caballi* and reported to be negative. We are stating that the testing should begin immediately and that effective January 1, 2011, no horse shall be allowed entry onto a Kentucky



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race track without verification that the required testing has been completed. The testing shall be performed and the results reported by a laboratory certified and approved by the USDA to conduct the testing and shall be completed on a blood sample collected from the horse during the 12 month period preceding the animal's entry onto the grounds. The testing is not a requirement for racing, but simply qualifying the horse for access to the track. This testing is in addition to the established health requirements that include each horse entering a Kentucky track demonstrate that they have tested negative for equine infectious anemia, been vaccinated against equine herpes virus type 1 and accompanied with a Certificate of Veterinary Inspection stating the animals to be free of disease and known exposure to a communicable disease.

We currently anticipate the requirement of testing for piroplasmosis to continue through the fall race meets and reserve the right to amend the testing requirement and/or frequency as deemed appropriate.

Feel free to contact me directly should you have any questions, comments or concerns regarding this directive.

Respectively,

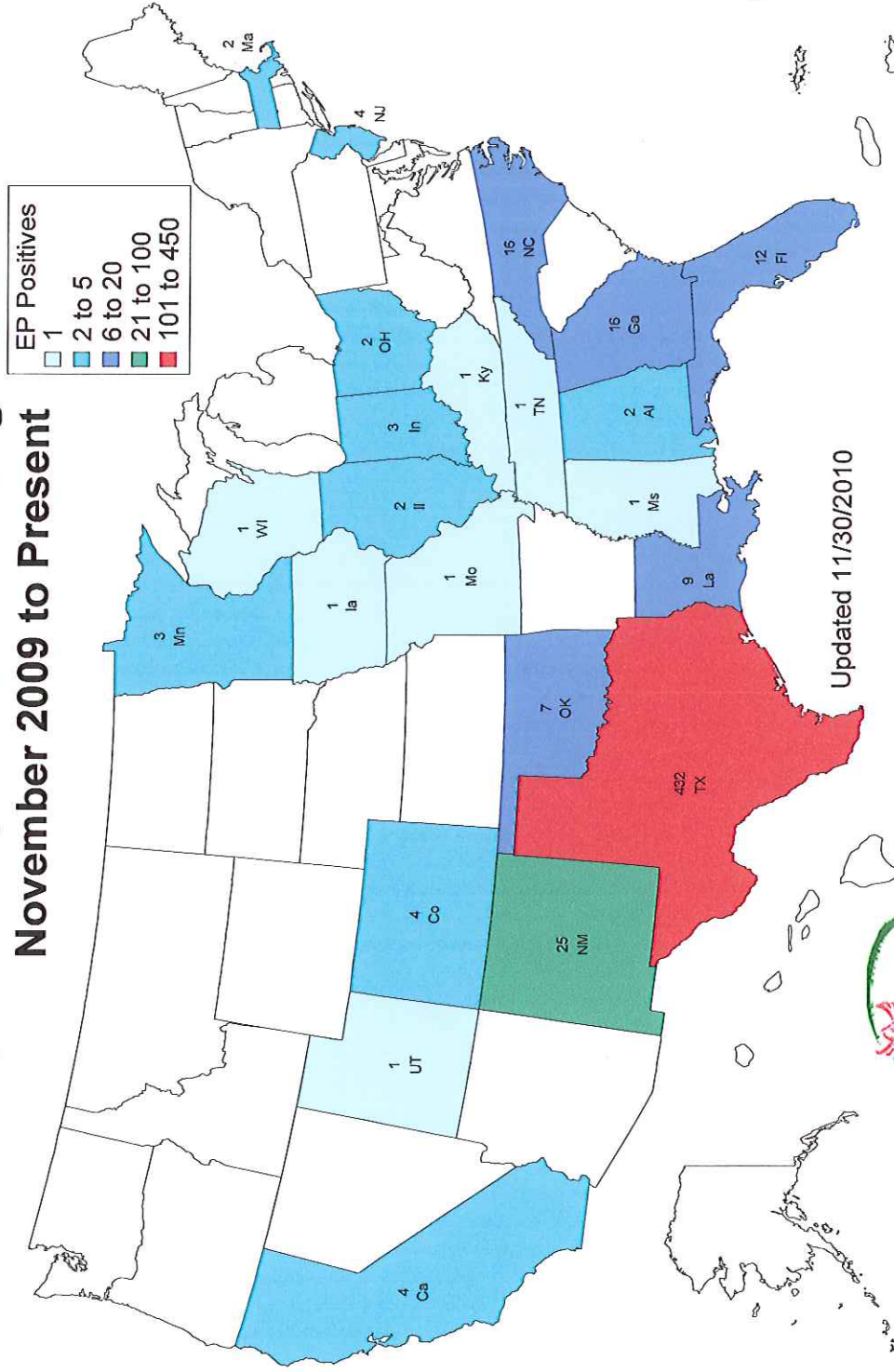


E.S. (Rusty) Ford  
Equine Programs Manager

Attachment: EP Distribution Map

Cc: Richie Farmer, Commissioner of Agriculture  
Robert Stout, Executive Director and State Veterinarian  
Lisa Underwood, KHRC Executive Director  
Mary Scollay, KHRC Equine Medical Director

# - Equine Piroplasmosis Investigations - November 2009 to Present



Prepared By:  
Kentucky State Veterinarians Office  
from data provided by USDA APHIS, Veterinary Services